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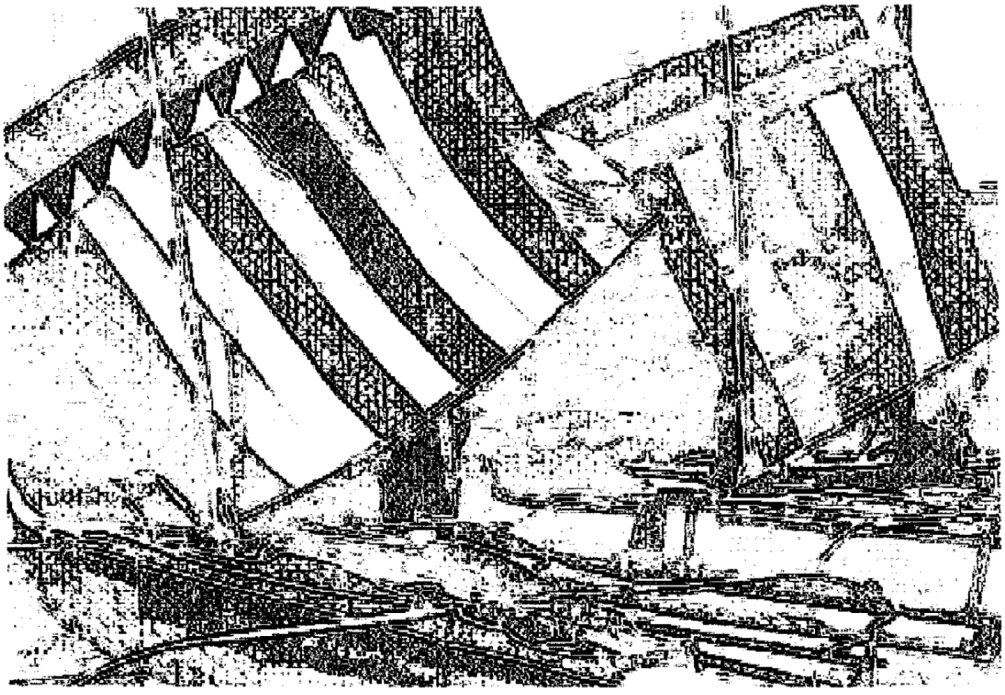
El Zamboanga de Antes



El Zamboanga de Antes

U N C U E N T O

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ORIGIN & LANGUAGE. The original and pre-Spanish name of Zamboanga was Nawan, and the original people of the land were the Subanon or river people, who settled in the hinterlands sometime in the 12th or 13th century. Those along the coastal lands were the seafaring Sama-Lutao people.

In 1569, the Spaniards began arriving at La Caldera, today's Recodo. Jesuit missionary Fr. Diego del Rosario started a mission there in 1585. Some 50 years later, the Spanish authorities started construction of a fort at Cagang-Cagang, Rio Hondo today, to guard the waters of Basilan Strait and to protect the Visayan Islands from pirates coming from Mindanao.

There were martyrs among the Jesuit missionaries in Mindanao in those early years. Fr. Francesco Paliola worked among the Subanons in Zamboanga del Norte and was killed on January 29, 1648. At present, there is a formal process to have Fr. Paliola canonized as a saint in the Catholic Church. Fr. Juan del Campo was also martyred in the Siukun (Siocon) area.

Sometime after 1637, Fr. Francisco Lado established a mission at the northwest coast of Basilan and dedicated the island to St. Ignatius of Loyola. On December 13, 1655 Frs. Alejandro Lopez and Juan Montiel were killed at the Rio Grande in Cotabato. By 1654 there were 1,000 Christian families there.

In 1635, Capitan Juan Chavez, 300 Spaniards and 1,000 Visayans landed in Zamboanga. They were joined by a group of Christian Lutaos from Dapitan, led by Fr. Pedro Gutierrez, the founder of Dapitan. Construction of the fort began on June 23, 1635 under the supervision of Fr. Melchor de Vera. This date marks the foundation of Zamboanga. All these early missionaries were from the Society of Jesus, founded in 1540. They arrived in the Philippines in 1581.

In 1637, the first school in Zamboanga was established by the Jesuits. The fort was originally named Fuerza Real de San Jose. In 1719 it was rededicated to Nuestra Señora del Pilar de Zaragosa. The image of the Virgen del Pilar was originally installed as a frontispiece over the main gate in January 1734.

In January 1900, the American authorities renamed the shrine Fort Pilar and the name has stayed to this day. It is probably "the only place in the world where a fort, intended for war, has become a sacred place for peace and reconciliation" (M Rodriguez CMF). Even the location of Fort Pilar is significant. It is situated between the Christian homes of the city and the Muslim homes of Rio Hondo, a symbolic bridge linking and bonding the two cultures of Zamboanga.

The Fiesta Pilar of Zamboanga is celebrated every year on October 12. It is also the fiesta of Zaragosa, Spain. In Spain the day is also celebrated as the Dia de la Hispanidad or Dia de la Raza and is a legal holiday in most countries of Latin America.

A 1734 map drawn by Fr. Pedro Murillo Velarde indicates the name Samboangan, after the sambuan or saguan, Malay for oar or paddle. It is the Sinama word for anchorage or mooring place, the stake to which boats are tied. In time the name got hispanized into Zamboanga. There are other versions to the name, but this one is the most plausible and is based on a physical map.

The people of Zamboanga come from the intermarriage between the outsiders and the native population, and the Chavacano language evolved from the combination of these different cultures. More than the Spanish soldiers, the Jesuit missionaries contributed significantly to the development of the language through their work of evangelization and education.

Chavacano is a mixture of Spanish, Cebuano, Tausug and some Tagalog terms. There are variations of this in different places. It used to be spoken in Cavite and Ermita. There are also some Chavacano speakers in Davao and Cotabato. The word "Chavacano" in Spanish means something coarse, common, poor taste, of low quality. In Mexico, it also refers to the apricot.

There are interesting false cognates between Chavacano and Spanish. A false cognate is a word that has different meanings in two languages. Here are samples of Chavacano words with their English and Spanish meanings: almuerzo: breakfast – lunch, barkada: peer group – ferry boat, iscucha: peek – listen, siguru: maybe – sure, regla: menstruation – rule, presta: borrow – lend, reclama: complain – reclaim, Pascua: Christmas – Easter.

PUEBLO VIEJO. An 18th century map of Zamboanga from Antonio Orendain's "Zamboanga Hermosa, Memories of the Old Town" shows the three zones of Pueblo Viejo around Fort Pilar; Pueblo Nuevo, which is today's downtown area, to the northwest; and the Moro-Chinese market district of Sama-Magay to the west, going to Cawacawa Boulevard. Nobody used the word "Muslim" in those days. Governor Lim Avenue was divided into three sections: Calle Magay, Calle General Blanco and Calle Jovellar. Tomas Claudio Street was divided into Calle Enriquez and Calle General Parrado. Pura Brillantes Street in front of the Puericulture Center was Calle Azcarraga, and Alejo Alvarez Street going to the sea was Calle Adovez then.

The 18th century map shows a very wide double road connecting Fuerza Pilar to the church next to Plaza España and the downtown area. Plaza España is Plaza Rizal today. A median strip or road island in the middle separated Calle Magallanes from Calle Carlos Uno. This map, together with the Murillo Velarde map, shows a stream from Rio Hondo flowing past Fuerza Pilar going northwest to Pueblo Viejo and on to Pueblo Nuevo and Magay. An old picture shows an aqueduct or open canal inside Pettit Bar-

racks. There is no such stream today, but later maps show Calle Madrid where the stream was.

During the 19th century, this wide Magallanes–Carlos Uno Avenida was the business center of Pueblo Viejo, which was also known as La Villa de Zamboanga. The map indicates something practically no one in Zamboanga remembers today. Aside from Manila, Zamboanga had its own Escolta. In Spanish it means "to escort." At the end of the 19th century, Zamboanga's Escolta had stores like American Hardware, Filipinas Bazaar, Smith Bell & Company, Riu Hermanos, Henry E. Teck, and Co Boon Liat. This area today is the mini-park after the Rizal monument, on the way to Fort Pilar and fronting the United Coconut Planters Bank. It is flanked on one side by Banco de Oro and on the other side by the Jackman Building.

By 1915, all the stores had moved to Calle Guardia Nacional, originally named Calle Felipe Dos, inside Pueblo Nuevo. Many decades later, Guardia Nacional became Mayor Cesar Climaco Avenue. It was and still is the main street of the city, although the big malls like KCC, SM Mindpro Citimall, Southway Square, Shopper's Gateway are located elsewhere. Plaza España became Plaza Rizal and Plaza de Don Juan de Salcedo was renamed Plaza Pershing after the military governor, Gen. John "Black Jack" Pershing.

General Pershing's name is associated with the development of the powerful caliber .45 pistol, which was needed bring down the juramentado or amok of those days. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines amok as "an episode of sudden mass assault against people or objects, usually by a single individual following a period of brooding, that has traditionally been regarded as occurring especially in Malaysian culture but is now increasingly viewed as psychopathological behavior occurring worldwide in numerous countries and cultures." Today we think of suicide bombers in the news.

THE AMERICAN ERA. More than 260 years of Spanish colonization in Zamboanga ended when the local Spanish authorities surrendered to the revolutionary Republica de Filipinas in 1899. Six months later, political infighting among the Filipinos enabled the waiting Americans to take over the government. American colonial rule began and Zamboanga became the capital of the Moro Province of Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago from 1903 to 1913.

A 1903 black and white picture from Helen Mendoza's "Childhood Memories of Zamboanga" shows a row of two-storied wooden houses with pointed nipa roofs. It is a sunny rustic scene of a wide dirt road with no sidewalks and bits of grass growing right outside the doorways of some houses. One of the structures to the left has a sign that says "sastreria" and a street sweeper with his escoba or broom leaning against a wall, looking exactly like a present-day caminero.

Another picture dated 1908 shows the wide road from Fort Pilar going downtown. The caption reads, "Looking west along Calle Carlos towards the side of the Catholic Church. Closest shop at left is an Indian store of Pohoomul Brothers, then Zam-

boanga Hotel. The 2nd building at right is Gebert's Picture Shop." The road has sidewalks and is lined on both sides with typical Spanish-era stone houses of brick and stone for the ground floor with an upper floor made of solid hardwood. The 1870 Immaculate Conception Church at that time was located at the corner of Calle Voluntarios and Calle Zaragosa, facing Plaza Pershing.

This picture seems to be mislabeled. An account somewhere says that Calle Carlos became Calle Madrid. Calle Madrid does not lead to the church, it leads to the Customs House (PNB today) past the Provincial Capitol. It is Calle Rizal that leads to the church. This means that it was Calle Carlos and Calle Magallanes that became Calle Rizal. The big and well-planted road island or mini-park between these two calles is still around on Rizal Street, on the way to Fort Pilar. This area after the Rizal Monument was the former Escolta de Zamboanga, as shown in a map.

One of those early stone houses from the Spanish era still exists today, near Barcode Restaurant. It is located at the corner of Rizal and Villalobos Streets, a block away from Chong Hua School. It was the home of the Yu family and our teacher, Lourdes Montojo. Our Grade II class once went there in 1955 to have cowboy costumes measured and sewn for a school program where we sang, "Oh where, oh where, has my little dog gone?" Chong Hua was then the Zamboanga Chinese High School.

Despite its historical past, Zamboanga does not seem to appreciate or preserve old structures. Aside from this very old house, there are only a handful of old structures left in the city. In 1893, a Chinese by the name of Ho Kong came to Zamboanga from Cotabato and changed his name to Francisco Barrios. He became a very successful and prominent businessman who eventually put up several buildings along Calle Madrid and elsewhere. Some of them are still around, one right across City Hall. During the 1960s, there was a Barrios Clinic at the corner of Marahui and Corcuera Streets, right next to the Chinese High School. Dr. Paquito Barrios was most likely related to the pre-war businessman.

The most prominent of these structures from the past is the 380-year-old Fort Pilar. Next is City Hall, constructed in 1907. Across this is the Barrios Building, constructed in 1928. Sadly, it is now a fast food outlet. These buildings, together with the well-preserved Bank PI building and a few others around are the only surviving old structures in the city. There is a Spanish-era, old and very dilapidated wooden house that is falling apart and looks abandoned on the way to Lantaka Hotel.

In 1912, the Banco de las Islas Filipinas, formerly El Banco Español Filipino, opened a branch in Zamboanga upon the recommendation of Gen. John Pershing. The bank was established on the ground floor of the governor's residence, which was formerly the home of Francisco Barrios. Today the well-preserved building of the Bank of the Philippine Islands or BPI still stands at the same corner of Madrid and Corcuera Streets. Behind it is the Post Office and the pier area, formerly the Pantalan de Barrios. Across Corcuera Street is the original Customs House, which is today the copra bodega

of the Escudero brothers. It is next to the Hock Guan Traders Building of the Lim brothers. This pantalan at the end of Calle Corquera was Zamboanga's wharf until 1928. Today it is the docking area for boats going to Basilan and the Sulu Archipelago.

The American Commonwealth period began in 1935 and ended after World War II, when the Philippines was granted independence on July 4, 1946. In 1962, President Diosdado Macapagal issued a proclamation that changed the commemorative date to June 12, 1898, the day we won our independence from Spain.

THE ATENEO DE ZAMBOANGA. In 1912, Fr. Manuel Sauras of the Society of Jesus established a parochial school, the Escuela Catolica, at the Immaculate Conception Cathedral downtown. The parish occupied an entire block surrounded by Calle Zaragosa, Calle Voluntarios and what is JS Alano Street today. Today this block is occupied by the Universidad de Zamboanga. The school became the Ateneo in 1916, and high school classes began in 1928. Senator Roseller Lim was the valedictorian of that first graduating class of 1932.

Roseller Lim became very popular as a labor leader and was elected congressman in 1949, when he was thirty-four years old. He became a senator in 1955 and was responsible for the Philippines becoming a member of the United Nations International Labor Organization (ILO).

The various titles given Lim included: the Great Filibuster, Champion of the Masses, Father of the Social Security Law, Outstanding Congressman for all the six years he served as Congressman of Zamboanga, Outstanding Senator for all the eight years of his term. Father of Zamboanga del Sur, Founder and first president of the Mindanao-Sulu-Palawan Labor Organization. Senator Lim was the only Zamboangueño ever to be elected to the Philippine Senate. He died of a heart attack on July 5, 1976. RT Lim Boulevard is named after him.

Back to the Ateneo story. Classes were later held across the street at the third floor of the Ateneo Building along I. Magno corners P. Reyes and Urdaneta Streets. The building used to be the Mindanao Theater. One account says this was owned by the Knights of Columbus, another account says it was bought by Bishop Jose Clos for 8,000 pesos. Still another account says that the Mindanao Theater was the site of the original Colegio del Pilar founded in 1894 by the RVM Sisters, meaning that Pilar College is older than the Ateneo by 18 years.

The Ateneo Grade School occupied the lower floors. The side of the building had a sign of "Zamboanga Hardware Co." After the Second World War, this building was replaced by City Theater, which burned down in 1994. Its ruins remain fenced in up to this day. It stands next to City Mart, facing Plaza Pershing.

In 1945, the city was bombed by the Americans to liberate the city from Japanese troops, and two thirds of the city was destroyed. In 1946, Fr. Eusebio Salvador transferred the cathedral and the Ateneo to a location a few blocks north along Bailen Street,

which became La Purisima Street in 1954. This new site was the Jardin de Chino y Camino Nuevo, a big vegetable garden. Today Camino Nuevo is Governor Alvarez Street.

From the late 1500s on, Jesuit missionaries throughout the Spanish era established missions, parishes and schools here and in other parts of Mindanao. In 1957, Fr. Jose Ma. Rosauro turned over the cathedral to the Claretian Missionary Fathers. He was the last Jesuit parish priest of Zamboanga. Zamboangueños and the Jesuits of today do not fully realize the very old and deep links between Zamboanga and the Society of Jesus. Today the only Jesuit presence in Western Mindanao is the Ateneo de Zamboanga University.

THE PRE-WAR YEARS DOWNTOWN. A 1928 photo shows the crossing at Calle Guardia Nacional and Calle Jovellar (Governor Lim Ave today), facing the Sucabon River to the north. "Socavon" in Spanish means a sinkhole, hollow or tunnel. At the left corner is Kwon Yuen Woo Grocery & Bakery. Next to it is Polar Barber Shop. Both stood where OK Bazaar is today. To the right of the picture and across Guardia Nacional is another Chinese store named Sing Eng Hing & Company.

Both structures are constructed of the usual concrete for the ground floor and wood for the second floor of that period. Two passersby in white tropical suits and hats are standing at the left side, with two khaki-clad policemen at the center of the street under a big umbrella. The store signs in English and Chinese tell us that back then, Zamboanga was already a Chinatown.

Calle Voluntarios, Don Pablo Lorenzo Street today, separated Pueblo Nuevo from Pueblo Viejo. Along this street was the Customs House, the Provincial Capitol, Chartered Bank, Rizal monument, Aurora Studio, Plaza Hotel, Plaza Pershing, American Pharmacy and Ideal Theater. It ended at the corner of Pilar Street to the northeast, where the Jovellar Elementary School was, across Shopper's Center, the Gateway today. The school occupied both sides of Pilar Street.

During the pre-war and post-war years, there was a big Tabacalera Warehouse where Shopper's Center is today. Was this place a cigar or cigarette factory in the distant and forgotten past, or was it just the name of a business establishment? Part of this former copra bodega is still around, along the Tomas Claudio side. The pre-war Japanese-owned Hanada Hotel was next to it, at the corner of Jovellar and Saavedra Streets, where Veterans Bank is.

When Zamboanga became a chartered city in 1937, the 30-year-old capitol building became City Hall. Across was the Customs House and behind it was the Sunken Garden. Next to this was the public market, which was right next to the pantalan and the sea.

In high school, I used to play hooky, escaping from afternoon Chinese classes to go fishing at the pantalan, ala-Tom Sawyer. My partner-in-crime ala-Huckleberry Finn was

my classmate Chè. The pantalan was the place to catch choka (squid) and to look for empty cigarette packets from abroad for my collection.

The streets of old Zamboanga all had Spanish names such as Madrid, Zaragosa, Barcelona, Urdaneta, Legaspi, Corcuera, Villalobos, Sevilla, Claveria, and Cervantes. All these names attest to Zamboanga as un precioso pedazo de España. A 1944 map shows that all Zamboanga streets were still called calles. Madrid Street has been renamed Nicasio Valderrosa Street, after the first mayor of the city.

For senior citizens, any mention of pre-war or post-war Zamboanga always refers to the Second World War of 1941-1945, not the Korean War of the 1950s, not the Vietnam War of the 1960s and not the Gulf War of 1990. Old maps of downtown Zamboanga show that the streets have pretty much remained the same up to the present. Almost all of them are two-lane streets designed for horse-drawn calesas and a few other vehicles. Believe it or not, rickshaws were around until they were outlawed in 1914. Today road widening projects are only done outside the downtown area, because there is no more room for expansion.

Back during the pre-war years, Zamboanga was truly the City of Flowers. Old photos show homes festooned with lush bugambillas and parasitas, as orchids were commonly known then, although botanists say it is not to correct to call them parasites. My mother had her own collection at our second floor porch in the 1950s and 1960s. Plaza Pershing was well planted with trees, shrubs and flowers everywhere. Old pictures show cars from the Al Capone era and calesas and people dressed in tropical suits in front of the plaza and the church across the street, dressed in their Sunday best.

Before reaching Fort Pilar, people had to pass through the military camp of the US Army. Fort Pilar was actually inside Pettit Barracks, which was the entire area before reaching Rio Hondo. Pettit Barracks was named after Col. James Pettit, who was killed in Zamboanga during the Philippine-American conflict at the turn of the century. The main entrance was Rizal Street and the barracks occupied both sides of the street, going past Villalobos all the way to the fort.

Pictures show that the camp looked like a country club with well-tended lawns, planted with thick acacia trees and coconut palms. It had an open and wide aqueduct with water lilies, which flowed into the city and which was located between Voluntarios and Corcuera Streets. This waterway was filled up when the city's waterworks system was installed by the American authorities. The centuries-old acacia trees around Fort Pilar and the Central Bank today are remnants of that era.

Here is a foreigner's description of Zamboanga from the 1920s: "The town, though small, is one of the most beautiful, not only in the Philippines, but of the Far East. It is characterized by shady trees and possesses very fine parks and exquisite gardens." In 1935 Julio Palacios wrote, "Of all the cities that we have visited in the Orient, the most beautiful, no doubt, is Zamboanga, not because of her grandeur nor the bright

structural designs but because of the exuberant vegetation that surrounds her and forms a dreamlike garden in every park."

The area where Lantaka Hotel stands today was the officers' quarters next to the sea. This hotel replaced the post-war Bayot Hotel by the sea, owned by Antonio Bayot, a Spaniard who used to operate the pre-war Plaza Hotel in front of Plaza Pershing. The hotel was recently donated by Hilda Walstrom to the Ateneo and has been renamed the "Ateneo de Zamboanga University Lantaka Campus." It will be used for educational, spiritual, religious and social development purposes.

The Hotel Bayot of my childhood had a big acacia tree in its open-air patio, right next to the sea, where Badjaos in their vintas came with their seashells and pearls to sell to tourists. Next door was the residence of Charlie Reith of Patalon Estate, which was next to Bel Air Hotel, overlooking the former Barrios Pantalan and the sea.

THE POST-WAR YEARS. Back in the day, the American authorities required that business establishments downtown be constructed of strong concrete materials. Some of these solid buildings survived the 1945 bombing of the city. At the corner of Guardia Nacional and I. Magno Streets was the pre-war three-storey Mason Building, which became the Mendoza & Sons Building after the war. A 1948 picture of the building has a sign outside the third floor of "Zamboanga AE Colleges." The next year the school transferred across to the block formerly occupied by the cathedral and the Ateneo.

After the war, the pre-war Ideal and Plaza Theaters of the Murga family continued to provide entertainment to the people of Zamboanga for many years. Other cinemas of the decades after WW II were Republic Theater, City Theater, People's Theater, Majestic Theater, Melody Theater, Mansion Theater, Orion Theater, Ever Theater, Nation Theater, Rizal Theater and Viva Theater. Has anyone ever realized that decades ago, Zamboanga was not only the City of Flowers, it was also the City of Theaters? Today it is the city of thousands and thousands of motorcycles and tricycles.

In those days, movies were advertised by a roving billboard-vehicle plastered on three sides with movie ads and a loudspeaker playing music and announcing the week's fare at this or that theater. Movie tickets cost 25 centavos, 50 centavos and 1 peso then, if I remember right. The cheapest ticket (entrada general) got you seats up close to the big screen. At the back was the butaca or orchestra section. Upstairs was the palco or balcony section and the loge section with the best seats. Everybody came out of the movies smelling of cigarette smoke in those clueless days. Smokers puffed away, on-screen and off-screen as well. Nobody heard about cancer then, not that it wasn't around. Macho smokers in those days had nicotine-stained teeth and fingers, including my father.

In the 1950s, the American movies were already in Technicolor while the grainy Tagalog and occasional Chinese movies were in black and white. I remember watching Shane, Quo Vadis and Django at City Theater and The Ten Commandments, Jerry Lewis

or John Wayne movies at Majestic Theater, next to the Fire Department. My childhood memories included movies from Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 20th Century Fox, Columbia Pictures and Paramount Pictures. We did not watch the black-and-white Tagalog movies, because Tagalog then was a foreign language to Zamboangueños and was just a subject at school. We even sang the National Anthem and recited the Oath of Allegiance in English.

All the movie theaters were only a few blocks away from our house at 55 Barcelona Street, behind ABC Bakery and next to the Continental Beauty Parlor. From our second floor window, I used to watch with fascination and trepidation how Manang Arsing and her Ilonga beauticians attached snake-like electric wires from oversized helmets to curl the hair of their customers. Today our former home is the site of a photocopy shop.

Between our house and the parlor was the small hollow fuselage of a downed WWII warplane minus its nose, engine, wheels, tail and wings. It stood head down like a cylindrical tower and its vacant cockpit was like an open window we climbed in and out of. It belonged to the Langford Iron Works down the street, since they used the 4-feet-high space below the parlor as a storage area and a junkyard. This was also the residential area of our neighborhood cats. We could hear the loud catfights even if we did not see them. Once, I remember greeting a young American Jesuit passing by in his sutana. He was probably Fr. Jim Meehan and he became my liturgy professor many years later at the Loyola School of Theology.

Above the parlor lived our friendly next door neighbors, the Fernando family. I remember the big helmet shells decorating the steps of their stairs. We also had these butung-sized seashells at home. This was a common sight in homes of the 1950s. Today these seashells are considered endangered species and are protected by government regulation. Also common in those days was the "Weapons of Moroland," a black shield displaying a collection of little replicas of the bladed weapons of the south. Across the street was the Baños house, and directly across us lived the family of Parmanand Shewaram of Calcutta Bazaar. Present day owners Suresh and Rajan were our childhood friends.

In the days before TV, the internet, home movies and malls, radio stations DXJW, DXRZ, DXYZ and DXLL also provided popular programs for everyone. My mother had one of the first small transistorized radios and was a fan of Tia Dely and the various soap operas in those days. I remember Eddie Ilarde, Leila Benitez and Bobby Ledesma of Student Canteen at noontime. Darigold Jamboree was also a popular program. Today I can still hear in my mind Noning Camins and his Radio Balagun commentaries.

Smartphones were unheard of and undreamed of then. Telephones were connected through an operator by dialing 04. Loud sirens meant a fire somewhere and anyone could dial the operator to ask, "Donde el quema?" Telephone numbers then were easy to remember, having only four numbers. Out-of-town telegrams or wires usually had very short messages, as they were charged per word. The telegrams had no periods,

so sentences ended with the word "stop." Example: "Pepe and Pilar have a dog stop Bantay is their dog stop." There is also a story of a telegram announcing the death of a relative arriving ahead of a telegram requesting money for the medical expenses of the same relative.

There were weekend singing competitions sponsored by Liberty Milk at the skating rink between the Chinese High School and the City High School near Fort Pilar. These shows were aired over the radio. There were also dances held in places like the Ateneo Gym, the School of Nursing at the General Hospital, or the back of the Puericulture Center or Centro, with live music from the Roebucks, the Vibrators or the Wizards combos. Today non-musical but delicious combos can be ordered in fast food outlets.

In the 1960s, Sheum's Circus used to come to Zamboanga. The Chinese name for this traveling circus was Sim Siong Hock. The circus acts took place at the gymnasium of the Zamboanga AE Colleges at the pantalan area after City Hall. It was my first time to see live elephants and tigers. I remember watching open-mouthed at their spectacular flying trapeze acts. Far-away Zamboanga in Southeast Asia was as excited as the rest of the world when the circus came to town.

Back then, there was a thriving night market of cafes, eateries and beer joints patronized by strollers out for some fresh sea air at the wharf. There were rumors of prostitutes at the red light district at the corner of Campaner Street, behind the Fire Department. Today the wharf is walled off and access is only through RT Lim Boulevard and Corquera Street. Also popular in those days were the carinderias that sold rebusao, saging frito, halo-halo of mongo and gulaman for 10 centavos or crushed iced milk for 5 centavos.

Then, as now, Zamboanga in September becomes awash with durian, mangosteen, lanzones, rambutan and marang fruit from here and from nearby Basilan and Jolo. The seasonal fruits flood the city and the highway stalls. At peak season prices become so low everyone can afford them. Zamboanga is lucky to be home to the king and queen of fruits, durian and mangosteen.

Back then, everyone used the term "wharf" instead of pier. Perhaps "wharf" and "city proper" are Americanisms from the past. Going northeast from the wharf, Voluntarios Street ended at Governor Lim Avenue, which led to Veterans Avenue and the Zamboanga General Hospital, founded in 1918. Today the hospital is known as the Zamboanga City Medical Center. Beyond the hospital is Lustre Street in Santa Catalina, ground zero of the September 9-28 2013 siege of Zamboanga by the MNLF. On the second day of the siege, I went out to curiously explore the deserted streets on my bike and was turned away from the General Hospital by a heavily armed military checkpoint. As I left, a soldier shouted, "Hoy! Guerra na! Bike na bike ka pa!"

MAYOR CESAR CLIMACO. The most famous Zamboangueño is easily Mayor Cesar C. Climaco. He became mayor in 1955 and was widely popular for his good govern-

ance, integrity and courage. Under his dynamic administration, Zamboanga, the City of Flowers, and Pasonanca Park with its tree house became world-famous tourist attractions. National and international Boy Scout jamborees were held here and visiting ocean liners would drop anchor at the local wharf and foreign tourists would roam the city. In those days, you simply walked past City Hall to go to the pantalan at the end of Voluntarios Street. Believe it or not, under his administration and once upon a long time, Zamboanga won an award as the cleanest and most beautiful city in the Philippines.

Once in a while, Mayor Climaco used to visit my father and have lunch with him at our downtown store. I remember him asking for his favorite Lapu-Lapu fish. On one occasion, he showed a confiscated gun and the black-and-white picture of a sleeping policeman who was on duty. Climaco was also known for his good relations with the Muslim community of the city. People found him approachable. He had a down-to-earth personality and was always cracking jokes everywhere he went.

When martial law was declared in 1972, Climaco left for the United States and vowed never to cut his hair until democracy was restored. He returned in 1976 and in 1980 he once more became mayor of Zamboanga City.

At the height of martial law, crime and violence ruled the city. Climaco became a one-man vocal and colorful critic of the Marcos administration. He was a very public admirer of Ninoy Aquino. Perhaps he was tolerated by Marcos because he did not have a strong political organization backing him. He put up a scoreboard of crime statistics and human rights abuses in front of City Hall, angering the criminals and martial law authorities. He drove around on his motorcycle, did not have bodyguards and did not carry a gun. He usually arrived ahead of the police, military or fire department in any crime scene or calamity. He was once described by a foreign writer as a "madcap sexy senior citizen."

Mayor Climaco once went inside a crowded slum to pacify two warring groups, while the police and military waited outside. Another unforgettable scene is that of Climaco climbing a fire ladder to help firemen put out a fire downtown.

In 1984, he finally won a seat at the Batasang Pambansa but then decided to stay in Zamboanga and finish his term as mayor, because he did not want to become a rubber stamp of the Marcos regime. On November 14, 1984 Climaco had just come from a fire scene near the La Merced funeral home and even kidded about reserving a coffin there. As he got on his motorcycle moments later, an assassin's bullet felled him in the middle of the street. He was 68 years old.

His funeral was the biggest ever in the history of Zamboanga. Thousands of Zamboangueños from all walks of life crossed social, cultural and religious lines and marched in solidarity to pay their respects and show their love for Mayor Cesar Climaco.

His epitaph reads: "He was one of the most colorful political figures. He was a patriot in the truest sense of the word, an epitome of honesty, a champion of the oppressed and the underdog. He was a modern Don Quixote, who fought the windmills of

graft and corruption." His tombstone at Abong-Abong Park in Pasonanca describes him as "A Man for Others."

THEN & NOW. Back in the 1950s, OK Bazaar was a store occupying the ground floor of a 2-storey wooden building along Guardia Nacional corner Governor Lim Ave. Today the OK Department Store is a four-storey building occupying an entire block. Before the war, OK Bazaar was a big store that sold school supplies and was owned by a Japanese woman named Mrs. Price. Another pre-war Japanese store was Asahi Bazaar selling bicycles. Other pre-war stores were Jurika Bazaar, Asia Bazaar, Yutivo Bazaar, Manila Bazaar, Indian Bazaar, etc. All the store owners were Chinese, Japanese, Americans or Indians. Back in the day, the population of Zamboanga was a melting pot of locals and Spanish mestizos, Chinese, Japanese and Indian businessmen, American troops and some European expatriates. It was a global city, long before anyone thought of the term.

The heart of downtown Zamboanga is the crossing at Guardia Nacional and Governor Lim Avenue. In the 1950s four stores were located at this junction. Across OK Bazaar was our family department store, Eng Hong Commercial, which was later replaced by El Barato Commercial in the 1960s, and which is Dunkin' Donuts today. At that time, it was bigger than OK Bazaar and it sold clothing, shoes, groceries, liquor, rice, kitchenware, etc. Across our store to the east was Avenue Commercial, a corner store that sold quality shoes. Across Avenue Commercial was Guan Seng Trading (later replaced by Asiatic Trading), a hardware store, across from OK Bazaar.

In the late 1960s, Sampaguita Trading was located at the Mendoza Building, together with the Bread and Butter Coffee Shop of AL Gonzales & Sons. Back then I worked at Sampaguita Trading during the summer months selling shoes, shirts, luggage and fixing watch straps. My salary was 30 pesos a month. Today the building is gone and the site is occupied by Young Mart Store.

Past the Guardia Nacional – Governor Lim crossing going to the General Hospital was City Lunch Restaurant and Tai Chiong Commercial, both on the corners of Governor Lim and P Reyes Street. P Reyes Street next to City Lunch was the post-war parking area of PU cars for hire. Next to City Lunch was the Consolidated Bank & Trust Corporation, TCBT or Solidbank, which opened in 1970. I worked here from 1970 to 1972. Today this is the site of Expression Mobile Center.

Next to Eng Hong Commercial on Governor Lim and toward the Police Station was Hock Bee Trading. Next to it on Mercado Street was Hong Bee Trading. Both stores are still around today. In high school, I learned to ride a borrowed bicycle from my classmate of Hong Bee Trading at the open yard of the Police Station. While still learning, I once crashed into the trash barrel there and ended inside with legs up in the air, just like a scene out of a Dolphy movie.

My motivation in learning to ride a bike was to go to Pilar College at Cawa-Cawa Boulevard to admire the view, not outside but inside the school. I remember a watchful RVM sister there, who many years later became one of my retreatants in Baguio. Today I still bike regularly but I go much, much farther than Pilar College.

Back then, Cawa-Cawa Boulevard was a two-lane road with a long stretch of beach with gray sand ideal for swimming and picnics. Today it is a four-lane boulevard with warning signs of pollution by e. coli bacteria. Much of the old beach has been reclaimed from the sea to widen the boulevard. The growing pier area has also reclaimed more land from the sea. Today there is only a little beach left at the end of Alejo Alvarez Street.

A block from the Sunken Garden was the pre-war and post-war Broad Building. It was located on the left side of Guardia Nacional Street, going north to Canelar. In the 1950s, this was the site of the post-war Kim Guan Trading, a textile store. Before the war, there was a store named the American Bazaar, "which sold almost everything from nails and hammers to tires and pencils and stationery. Everything, except fried chicken and beer."

A pre-war advertisement proclaimed: "AMERICAN BAZAAR, A. Broad, Proprietor. Hardware, Gents Furnishing. This is the place to make your purchases. Come and see at our windows. Buy Goodrich Tires for your car. It is the best in the long run. New and fresh shipment of films just arrived from the States. Jewelry, Cut Glass, Kodaks, Lady's Goods, Black Coral Bracelets, Earings (sic) and Pins mounted in gold or silver. An expert engraver at your service."

The Broad Building has since been demolished and its site remains an empty lot today, next to Shopper's Plaza. The establishments of Zamboanga after WWII were mostly Chinese stores, together with three Indian stores and a couple of Batangueño stores.

The original 2-storey Astoria Hotel in the 1960s was located at I. Magno Street facing Plaza Pershing. It was operated by the owners of Lim Shi Store. Back then, Plaza Pershing was the venue of nightly Christmas caroling contests presented by all the schools of Zamboanga. The evenings there and around the City Hall area, then as now, were brightly lit with multi-colored Christmas lights and the nativity scene of the Holy Family. Today we can see veiled Muslim mothers and their children taking selfies at these displays and looking exactly like Mary with her veil and baby. What a wonderful scene of Zamboangueños living together in peace and harmony.

Facing Plaza Pershing, Astoria Hotel was flanked by La Purisima and Barcelona Streets. To its left and across La Purisima was the Manuel Wee Sit Building from the pre-war years. At the ground floor was the typing school of Southern City Colleges, where I learned to type one summer, after my third year in high school. On the second floor were various offices and the Chinese Catholic Chapel at the corner of Governor Lim and

La Purisima, where Southway Square is today. In 1960, the chapel transferred to Nuñez Street and became the St. Joseph Parish administered by Frs. Paul Lee and John Chang.

That same year the 3-storey Palace Hotel opened at the corner of Almonte and Tomas Claudio Streets and later became the Capitol Hotel, Restaurant and Night Club managed by Santos A. Wee. An existing mottled-brown stained menu with telephone numbers 1979, 1793 & 1022, brings us back in time with these samplings: fried rice, pansit guisado, lumi special were only 1 peso per order, while buttered chicken, camaron rebusado and lapu-lapu sweet and sour were 3 pesos per order. One whole fried chicken was 5 pesos, and the most expensive dish was abalone guisado at 6 pesos. Coffee was 50 centavos and Milo was 1 peso. Soft drinks were 30 centavos at the restaurant and 1 peso at the night club. All prices were more expensive at the night club. A bottle of Scotch Whiskey cost 40 pesos. Imagine its price in terms of today. In those long ago pre-K Pop days, Chinese actors and actresses from Hong Kong or Taiwan would visit Zamboanga and stay at the Palace Hotel or the later Capitol Hotel.

Today a branch of Winzelle Suites Hotel is there, next to the Red Ribbon Bakeshop and Gateway Mall. Across this and facing La Purisima Street was the Zamboanga Times newspaper of Armando Lopez. Today this is the site of Limtown Center. One of the first bake shops in the city and next to Plaza Theater was Mrs. Lopez's Laura's Bake Shop.

The street in front of the Philippine National Bank and the market is JS Alano Street. From the Sunken Garden next to PNB, Guardia Nacional went north three blocks to the Fire Department and split into San Jose Street and Sucabon or Mayor Jaldon Street today. To the left and after the big vacant lot of the former Wilson Ice Plant along San Jose Street is the Tabuk Bridge.

San Jose today is Ledesma Street. The river here flows all the way from Pasonanca, Sta. Maria, Canelar, down along M. Calixto, Magay and out to sea. Cinnamon in Spanish is canela. An account says that once upon a time, Canelar was a big cinnamon plantation. It is likely that the name of Canelar comes from the word canela.

I used to see Badjaos collecting discarded milk cans, which were very common in those days, opening them and washing them at the Magay river. They were then sold to stores in the market to be used as bagon containers in those pre-plastic bag days. No wonder bagon tasted better back then!

Along San Jose was the public elementary school, which occupied an entire 2.8 hectare block surrounded by San Jose, Carmen, Tomas Claudio and Melanio Calixto Streets. Back then it was known as the Burleigh School. Private Albert L. Burleigh was an American volunteer soldier-teacher killed in Jolo in 1908. After the war, it became the Central Elementary School. Today it is the Zamboanga Central District of the East Elementary School and the West Elementary School.

Guardia Nacional Street today is Mayor Cesar Climaco Avenue. It seems that Zamboanga is fascinated with avenues and governors. We have Governor Alvarez Ave-

nue, Governor Ramos Avenue, Governor Camins Avenue, Veterans Avenue, Mayor Agan Avenue and Governor Lim Avenue. An avenue is defined in the dictionary as "a broad road in the town or city, typically having trees at intervals along its sides." One thinks of the broad tree-lined avenues of Paris leading to the Eiffel Tower. Zamboanga's untypical avenues do not match the dictionary description. The only street that fits this description is Rizal Street on the way to Fort Pilar.

In the 1950s, there were still dirt roads with grass growing everywhere and open canals teeming with wild guppies, which we called rainbow fish. Perhaps the dusty streets of the past explain why Zamboangueños continue to have a tradition of splashing water outside their homes or shops to minimize the dust from the streets, even if the streets today are already cemented.

There was not too much traffic in those days. Traffic consisted mainly of calesas, some jeepneys and a few buses or trucks here and there, and all of them used the parada or parking areas around the market. I used to go there and pick up long strands of horse hair from the ground to make a little noose for catching lizards! Every class day, our suki Ñor Herminio and his buri hat picked us up and brought us home from school with his calesa. He was a gentle and kind man who patiently taught me how to drive the calesa. The fare was a peseta or 20 centavos, considering that in those days the minimum wage was 120 pesos a month. The calesas everywhere left behind evidence of the horses' diet on the streets, until a city ordinance required all horses to have a sack or "diaper" behind their tails to keep the city clean. The collected droppings were recycled into fertilizer that was "poopular" with gardeners.

As a child, I used to watch swallows or golondrinas darting back and forth, catching insects or resting on the electric wires passing outside our 2nd floor corredor or porch. I also remember seeing white-breasted grey sea eagles soaring majestically overhead. Our playground was the Centro Puericultura de Zamboanga across the street, a stone's throw or just a mother's shout from our house near the corner of Barcelona Street.

El Centro, as everybody called it then, was a wide open grassy area with a wooden 2-storey maternity clinic in the middle. The grounds had seesaws, swings and a cemented rink at the La Purisima side for weekend public dances. There was a thick banana grove at the north side of the Centro, where we played hide and seek, Indian-pana or guerra-guerra, throwing the prickly pega-pega weed at each other. We spent many happy afternoons there running around, flying homemade kites made of newspaper and broomsticks, climbing trees and catching red, blue or green apan or dragonflies and langgostas or grasshoppers.

From our second floor corredor or porch, we used to watch religious processions with their carrozas or higantes at La Purisima Street passing the Centro. We could also watch the ROTC cadets in their grey Air Force uniforms march past during parades. During my college years, I was the smallest and last ROTC cadet of the Ateneo contingent

during parades. Behind me were the cadets of the next contingent, the Zamboanga AE Colleges. How come they never complained about always being in second place? In my second year, I passed the officer candidate school and became the colors officer of the ADZ ROTC.

Right across La Purisima Street were the Jing-Jong Bowling Lanes of the Valderrosas and the Mindpro Lumber Yard of the Toh family. From our house we could hear the sound of bowling balls in the distance. Today I can still hear them in my head. This area is now occupied by the SM Mindpro Citimall. At the former Centro is a new Jollibee store, which remains unopened because of a legal dispute.

The first time I learned how to take public transportation was when I graduated from college and was sent to Manila by the bank I joined. Growing up back then, I walked everywhere from our house to the Chinese High School, passing the Blue Moon Bakery, the Sanchez Candle Factory, the Langford Iron Works and the Astoria Hotel; to Plaza Pershing with its extant 1915 kiosk, to Fort Pilar, to the market, to the pantalan, to Cawa-Cawa Boulevard, to church and to the Ateneo. We only took a ride when going to Pasonanca Park or to Caragasan Beach for picnics or to visit the cemetery at San Roque on Sundays.

A bit of FYI here. Everyone thinks the Wee-Wee pool at Pasonanca is named because it is a little swimming pool for children. Nobody today knows that it is actually named after two families surnamed Wee who donated funds for the pool in the late 1950s. The name was thought up by Mayor Cesar Climaco himself.

Today the calesas are long gone. They have been replaced with thousands and thousands of motorcycles and tricycles plus all sorts of big Sports Utility Vehicles all clogging up the city streets. In recent years, most of these streets have become one-way streets. Public vehicles are now restricted to different parking places outside the downtown area and commuters have to walk to and from these parking areas. The traffic woes of Zamboanga today are a match for the traffic woes of Manila.

The congestion is not only in terms of vehicles and traffic. Walking around downtown today is just like going inside the crowded public market. The streets are teeming with people everywhere, not only on the sidewalks but spilling out into the busy streets. The stores and malls are crowded not only during weekends.

The time is coming when downtown Zamboanga will have no choice but become a walking city and no more vehicles of any kind will be allowed inside. Gone are those idyllic pre-war and post-war years, when Zamboanga was a place where people walked everywhere, even as far as the Zamboanga Normal School, WMSU today, three kilometers away.

Let us now go back for a second look at our Chavacano language. Go to any store downtown or to any restaurant nowadays and ask for something in Chavacano and you are lucky to get a Chavacano response. Zamboanga today is once again a melting pot,

not of foreigners this time, but of migrants from all over the islands. Times have certainly changed. Here is some more information about Chavacano from Wikipedia:

"Chavacano or Chabacano in Spanish literally means "poor taste, vulgar, common, of low quality or coarse." During the Spanish era, it was called by the Spaniards the "lenguaje de la calle," language of the street, or "lenguaje de cocina," kitchen Spanish, to refer to the Chabacano spoken by the people of Manila, particularly in Ermita.

"On 23 June 1635, Zamboanga City became a permanent foothold of the Spanish government with the construction of the San José Fortress (later renamed Fort Pilar). The authorities used imported labor from Luzon and the Visayas, which consisted of Spanish and Mexican soldiers, masons from Cavite, sacadas from Cebu and Iloilo, and the local Samals and Subanons.

"Language differences made it difficult to communicate with another, and work instructions were issued in Spanish. A pidgin language developed and became a full-fledged Creole language still in use today as a lingua franca and/or as an official language, mainly in Zamboanga City.

"The highest number of Chavacano speakers are found in Zamboanga City and in the island province of Basilan. A significant number of Chavacano speakers are found in Cavite City and Ternate. There are also speakers in some areas in the provinces of Zamboanga del Sur, Zamboanga Sibugay, Zamboanga del Norte, Davao, and in Cotabato City. Chavacano is the only Spanish-based Creole in Asia. It has survived for more than 400 years, making it one of the oldest Creole languages in the world."

There is a popular traditional song in Spanish about Zamboanga. The English version is from the Major Chords of Zamboanga:

NO TE VAYAS DE ZAMBOANGA	DON'T YOU LEAVE ZAMBOANGA
No te vayas, no te vayas de Zamboanga	Don't you leave, don't you leave Zamboanga
Que me puedes, que me puedes olvidar	You might, you might forget me
No te vayas, no te vayas, no me dejes	Don't go, don't go, don't leave me
Porque sin ti, no puedo estar	Because without you, I can't stay
No llores, paloma mía	Don't you cry, my Paloma
No llores, que volveré	Don't cry for I'll return
No llores, que cuando llegue	Don't cry for when I arrive
Paloma mía, te escribiré	My Paloma, I'll write to you
Con una pluma de ave	With a bird's feather
Con un pedazo de papel	With a piece of paper
Con la sangre de mis venas	With the blood of my veins
Paloma mía, te escribiré	My Paloma, I'll write to you

JULY312019

This write-up first came out in "RIQUESAS: CHABACANO ESSAYS AND STUDIES," Vol 3 2019 published by the City Government of Zamboanga.

ONCE UPON A TIME IN ST. JOSEPH PARISH

Before the 2nd World War from 1941 to 1945, the Immaculate Conception Cathedral of Zamboanga, through Fr. Marcelino Turiel SJ, started an apostolate with the Chinese community. The cathedral was then located right where Universidad de Zamboanga stands today. After World War II, Fr. Eusebio Salvador SJ transferred the cathedral and the Ateneo de Zamboanga to its present site.

On December 8, 1954, this Chinese apostolate became a parish under the title of Our Lady, Help of Christians. It was established at the Chinese Catholic Chapel and was located at the second floor of the Manuel Wee Sit Building at the corner of Gov. Lim and La Purisima Streets. Fr. Yeomides Crespo SJ was its first parish priest. In 1956, Fr. Paul Lee took over and was the first diocesan priest to be assigned a parish in the city.

When I was in grade four at the Zamboanga Chinese High School, I started going with my classmates to the green house right next to the school. It had plenty of parlor games, comic books and sports equipment – the equivalent of today's computer games.

The place was the home of Fr. Paul Lee and Fr. John Chang. I started frequenting the place, but I soon found out I was not a Catholic. My mother's family was close to the American Episcopalians during the pre-war and post-war years. The Anglicans of the Church of England are known as Episcopalians in the United States. I saw faded wedding pictures of them posing with an American bishop and with other missionaries. My parents were married at the Episcopalian Church next to Brent Hospital.

I remember Mrs. Hulda Lund, a big American lady who looked like a female Santa Claus, minus the beard, boots and red suit, coming in her car to fetch us for Sunday school at the Episcopal Church next to the Sucabon River, across from the Fire Department. We also went to the Good Shepherd Church at Upper Calarian, where I was a ring bearer at my aunt's wedding years before. Today there is a Lund Memorial Park just before the church and the military checkpoint there. Growing up in the 1950s, my mother also used to bring us to the Buddhist temples at Tetuan and Canelar.

Back at the priests' house, I learned that Catholics attended Sunday mass at the Chinese Catholic Chapel on the 2nd floor of the Wee Sit building. On the La Purisima side was the chapel, and across the hallway were various offices. On the ground floor of the building was the typing school of the Southern City Colleges. Years after the parish moved out, the building became the Galeria Commercial Complex. Today Southway Square occupies the whole block.

The chapel was only two blocks away from our house at Barcelona Street. I began frequenting the place and started attending catechism class. My parents raised no objections when my brothers and sisters joined me and soon after, we were baptized as Catholics. I have fond memories of my mother waking us up for Sunday mass.

I would wake up at 4:30 AM and be one of the first to go to church to help clean the place for the Sunday masses. There was something special about walking through

the dark silent streets to be of service to God. Little did I know what was going to happen to me in the future.

We became members of the Chinese Catholic Children (CCC), which later became the Chinese Catholic Youth (CCY), which finally became the Filipino-Chinese Catholic Youth (FCCY) in 1976. Fr. Lee was also our organist during choir practice, teaching us songs like "To Jesus Christ our Sovereign King... Heart of Jesus Meek and Mild... O King of Might and Splendor..." Fr. Lee was the one who changed the name of the parish to St. Joseph Parish.

I started my ecclesiastical career taking up the collection at mass, because I could not memorize the Latin responses to serve at mass. I became a server only in college. By then the Latin mass had given way to the English mass.

The back of this second-floor chapel had a big multi-purpose room overlooking the street below. It had wide open windows, different books and all kinds of games. We had all our activities here after the Sunday masses.

During Christmastime, religious images, medals, rosaries and prayer books were given away in exchange for the attendance chits or *asistencia* we got during catechism class after the mass. Those who attended mass received a chit with 4 points and those who came only for the class got 2 points. Throughout the year, we carefully collected these chits for the Christmas giveaways, which were worth so many number of points each. Two of my prized childhood possessions were a white plastic crucifix and a prayer book titled My Daily Bread, which I got in exchange for those chits.

On one occasion, somebody from the street below threw firecrackers up through the wide windows while the place was all ready for the New Year's party. The loud explosions, thick smoke and dirty smell frightened all of us, and to this day I have never forgotten that incident.

In 1960, the Chinese parish transferred to a new location at Nuñez Street and became known as the St. Joseph Parish. Right next door was the big unoccupied Lorenzo house. On the Tomas Claudio side was the Murga residence, which is the parish parking lot today.

The priests took up residence on the ground floor of the Lorenzo house, which had a caretaker and his family at the back of the house. There was an open gate between the church site and the spacious garden of the Lorenzo property, which became our playground. While construction of the church was going on, all our activities like meetings and practices were held right next door.

Once in a while, a ball would disappear into the thick and tall reeds at the back and never be found again. We enjoyed playing hide and seek and climbing upstairs to explore the dusty, dark and empty rooms and then had fun racing down, shrieking with fright. Many years later, the owners of the house returned and today it is the home of the Lobregats.

We had many fun-filled weekend activities at St. Joseph Parish. There were excursions or picnics at Pasonanca Park. We were the first to use the newly-constructed Wee-Wee children's pool.

Reminiscing about the early years of St. Joseph Parish will not be complete without those memories of the free breakfast for mass servers after the 7:30 AM children's mass, courtesy of Fr. Thomas Chao, who became parish priest in 1972. Perhaps this, plus all the weekend activities, fun and camaraderie of those growing years all contributed to my future interest in the priestly life.

St. Joseph School began as a parochial school in 1965 with a couple of classrooms above the meeting hall at the back of the church. We had our CCY Sunday meetings in these rooms. We made new friends with CCYers from other places through the summer conventions. I spent one summer in Jolo with my CCY friends there, where I met Ben Go of the future Garden Orchid Hotel, who was courting my friend's sister, who later became his wife.

The post-Vatican II English mass came with guitar music. During college and after graduation, I played the guitar at the Sunday masses in St. Joseph Parish, the Ateneo Chapel, the Cathedral, at Tetuan and even far-away Manicahan, where I used to join the Mercedarian Sisters in their Sunday apostolate. I also taught catechism at the Central Elementary School. I even tagged along the Operation Love-Your-Neighbor Sunday outreach program of the Cursillistas. Don't ask how I managed to be here, there and everywhere, but I did.

After college, I worked for a few years before I realized I could not run away from the Hound of Heaven, a poem by Francis Thompson about God's inescapable presence in the deepest recesses of the human heart. I joined the Society of Jesus in 1972 and got ordained ten years later at the Ateneo Chapel here in Zamboanga. Fr. David Alonso was the Master of Ceremonies. The next day I celebrated my thanksgiving mass at St. Joseph Parish, with Fr. Joseph Kung at my side.

As a seminarian in Manila, I was able to visit the aging Fr. Paul Lee at a far-flung parish somewhere in Rizal Province. Of course, he did not remember me from all the countless children he had baptized many years before. Today I know this feeling. Years later, as a priest during a trip to the Bicol region for a retreat, I also met the almost toothless but still smiling Fr. John Chang in Legazpi. Wonder of wonders! He did dimly remember my name, although not my face.

Now a senior citizen, I look back at all these nostalgic memories and realize how God was always there throughout the years of my youth, patiently weaving together the foundational mosaic of my priestly life. May these glimpses into the past also trigger your own fond memories of St. Joseph Parish, once upon a time.